An Introduction or Primer on the Rules and Strategy And Tactics of the German Card Game Skat

By J.Mamoun

Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Introduction

Skat is a German trick-taking card game that is comparable in complexity to Contract Bridge. Skat is considered the most "scientific" of card games, and will stimulate the mind in very creative, analytical ways.

Skat uses a shortened 32 card deck, where the cards 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are deleted from the deck. The rules of modern Skat are rather complicated. Readers can consult wikipedia for the rules, or use an on-line translator program to read German websites on Skat, to gain information about the rules. In addition, the Skatordnung and the International Skat Order publish official rules of modern Skat in German and English languages.

There are two kinds of Skat games or game rules: an obsolete type called American Skat or Tournee Skat, and the Modern Skat game that is played today and is recognized as the official Skat game by the Skatordnung, which is the designated German Skat authority. Most books on Skat published before 1970 will feature the obsolete rules, particularly older english-language books. Almost all books that explain the game with modern rules are published in German. It can be a bit confusing to read books on both kinds of games, so it is advisable to stick to the Modern Skat rules, which are used in modern tournaments and in most computer programs on Skat.

Basic Explanation of the Rules of Skat

Note: The rules of Skat are detailed. It is possible that some details may be missing from this basic intro. The reader should read several sources about the rules of Skat, to ensure total awareness of the rules and rule details.

Skat is a 3-player card game where each player is dealt 10 cards each, and the two remaining cards are dealt face down in a discard pile called the Skat. Each player looks at their respective cards, and decides if the cards can be used to win one of three types of Skat games: a suit game, a grand game or a null game.

With a suit game, a specific suit (diamonds, hearts, clubs or spades) will be declared as a trump suit. In addition, jack cards are also trump, and jack cards out-trump all cards, including cards from the trump suit. The highest-ranking non-jack cards can win a trick, if no jack card is played in that trick.

With a grand game, only the jack cards are trump cards. The highest-ranking non-jack cards can win a trick, if no jack card is played in that trick.

With a null game, the declarer cannot win any trick. That is, the declarer must lose each trick by playing the lowest-ranking card in a trick every time.

There are 10 tricks in a round of Skat. With each trick, each player puts down a card onto the table, exposed for all the players to see. If the first card of the trick is a non-jack card, then the suit of that first card becomes the “dominant” suit of that trick. If every card in that trick is of the same suit as the first card, then the highest-ranking of the three cards will win that trick. Generally, each player must follow suit and play a card from the same suit as the first card played in that trick. However, if a player does not have cards from the suit of the first card of the trick, the player can play out of suit.

Trick-taking with Suit and Grand Games (Different from Trick-taking with Null Games)

There are 10 tricks in a round of Skat. With each trick, each player puts down a card onto the table, exposed for all the players to see. If the first card of the trick is a non-jack card, then the suit of that first card becomes the “dominant” suit of that trick. If every card in that trick is of the same suit as the first card, then the highest-ranking of the three cards will win that trick. Generally, each player must follow suit and play a card from the same suit as the first card played in that trick. However, if a player does not have cards from the suit of the first card of the trick, the player can play out of suit. If the suit of the first card of the trick is not from the trump suit, then that first card can be out-ranked in that trick by any card played from the trump suit. If two trump cards are played in a suit that is started with a non-trump card, then the highest-ranking trump card in that trick wins the trick.

Cards are ranked in a special way. The top-ranking card is the J♣, followed by the J♠, the J♥, and the J♦. Next in rank are the A, 10, K, Q, 9, 8 and 7. This is an unusual card-ranking system compared to Contract Bridge. Note how the 10 out-ranks any non-jack card except for the ace.

Examples of tricks in the Game of Skat

If the first player of a trick puts down the 10♦, then the diamonds suit will be the “dominant” suit of that trick. Suppose that the two other cards are the J♥ and the A♦. Normally, the A♦ would out-rank the 10♦ and win the trick. However, the J♥ out-ranks all of these cards, and the player playing the J♥ will win the trick.

Suppose, however, the first player of a trick puts down the 10♦, and the two other players put down the J♥ and the J♠. The J♠ will win the trick, since the J♠ outranks the J♥.

Suppose, however, the first player of a trick puts down the 10♦, and the two other players put down the A♦ and the 5♠. The player who put down the 5♠ played out of suit, since that player did not have a diamonds card to play. Now, if this was a suit game, and the spades suit was the declared trump suit, then the 5♠ would out-rank the other cards and win the trick. However, if this was a grand game, where only the jack cards are trump cards, then the highest-ranking card of the “dominant” suit of the trick, or the suit of the card that was used to start the trick, would win the trick; in this case, the A♦ would win. However, if this was a suit game, and the declared trump suit was the hearts suit, then none of the cards of the trick would be from the trump suit. The highest-ranking card of the “dominant” suit of the trick, or the suit of the card that was used to start the trick, would win the trick; in this case, the A♦ would win. However, if this was a suit game, and the declared trump suit was the diamonds suit, then the A♦ would out-rank the cards on the table and would win the trick.

Trick-Taking Points in Grand or Suit games in Skat

In Skat, the declarer is one player, and the defenders are the two other players. The declarer plays against the two defenders, who play as a team. The declarer is trying to win by winning the most points of the 10-trick round of Skat. The defenders as a team combine their points and try to defeat the declarer by having more points than the declarer after the 10 tricks are finished. Specifically, there are a total of 120 trick-taking points that can be won in a 10-trick round of Skat. The team (either the defender team or the declarer team) that wins the majority of points (61+ points) wins that 10-round trick-taking phase of the game. Also, the defenders win if the defenders score 60 trick-taking points, even though this is technically a tie score between the defenders and the declarer..

In the trick-taking phase of the game, the cards have specific point values. The Ace is 11 points, the 10 is 10 points, the King 4 points, the Queen 3 points, and the Jack cards 2 points. The number cards 7, 8 and 9 count for zero points. For each suit, then, players can win up to 28 points from the non-jack cards. For the four suits, this totals to 28 x 4 = 112 points, along with 8 points for the jack cards, totaling 120 possible trick-taking points.

For example, if a player wins a trick that contains the cards A♦, K♦ and 8♦, then the total value of the cards is 15 points. The player keeps the cards from that trick, and will add up all the points from all the tricks won at the end of the 10-trick round of Skat.

Trick-taking with Null Games
(Different from Trick-taking with Grand or Suit Games)

There are 10 tricks in a round of Skat. With each trick, each player puts down a card onto the table, exposed for all the players to see. If the first card of the trick is a non-jack card, then the suit of that first card becomes the "dominant" suit of that trick. If every card in that trick is of the same suit as the first card, then the highest-ranking of the three cards will win that trick. Generally, each player must follow suit and play a card from the same suit as the first card played in that trick. However, if a player does not have cards from the suit of the first card of the trick, then the player can play out of suit.

Cards in null games are ranked the same way as they are ranked in Contract Bridge. The top-ranking card is the A, followed by the K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8 and 7. In a null game, the declarer does not want to win any of the 10 tricks. If the declarer wins only one trick, then the declarer immediately loses the null game.

Suppose the declarer starts a trick with a 7 card. The declarer will (fortunately) lose that trick, since no card is lower in rank than the 7 card.

Suppose that the declarer starts a trick with the 9 card. The declarer can win the trick (and lose the null game), if one defender puts down an 8 card, and the other puts down a 7 card. However, if one defender has both the 8 and the 7 cards, then the other defender will probably put down a card higher-ranked than the 9 card, which will allow the declarer to (fortunately) lose the trick.

The suit of the first card in a trick in a null game will be the “dominant” suit of that trick. The lowest-ranking card from that suit in that trick will lose that trick. All players must follow suit by playing a card from the same suit of the suit of the first card of the trick. However, if a player does not have a card from that suit, that player does not have to follow suit, and can play any card. A card that is played out of suit in a null game, that is not from the same suit as the first card played in the trick, cannot ever win a null game trick.

In a null game, the cards do not have trick-taking points values. A null game declarer, unlike a grand game or suit game player, does not want to gain a majority of 61 points from trick-taking. Instead, a null game declarer only wants to lose all of the tricks of the null game.

The Skat Auction

The game of Skat has an auction feature, that makes the game complicated. After being dealt 10 cards, each player bids an auction value, based on which kind of game (grand, null or suit) the player thinks the player can win.

Each game type (grand, null or suit) has a fixed “base” point value. A grand game base value is 24, a suit game base value is 12 for a clubs suit game, 11 for a spades suit game, 10 for a hearts suit game, and 9 for a diamonds suit game. A null game has a fixed set of base points values of 23, 35, 46 and 59, depending on the kind of null game played.

There are also score “multipliers” in Skat, that are multiplied by the game base value to increase the game points yielded from a 10-trick round of Skat. Determining the “multiplier” value can be a bit complicated. If a declarer plays a grand game that ultimately ends up with a multiplier of 3, then the declarer will win 24 x 3 = 72 game points for that round of Skat. The “multiplier” value of a game is only applicable to grand or suit games. Null games have fixed game point values, and are not affected by multipliers.

What are these multipliers for grand and suit games? A declarer gains a multiplier of 1 by winning the 10-trick round of Skat. If the declarer wins 90+ points in the trick-taking phase of the game, the declarer will win a “schneider” win, and gain 1 more multiplier. If the declarer wins all tricks of that round of Skat, then the declarer will win a “schwarz” victory, and gain 1 more multiplier. Note that winning a schwarz victory also implies winning a schneider victory, so that a winner of a schwarz victory gains both the schneider multiplier and the schwarz multiplier. If the declarer wins the game with the declarer’s cards open on the table for all of the defenders to see, then the declarer plays an “open” or “ouvert” game, and gains 1 more multiplier.

There is another set of multipliers called the “tops” or “matadors” multiplier. Basically, the number of cards that exist in a 10-card hand, in an unbroken ranked sequence, starting with the J♣, and perhaps continuing with the J♠, the J♥, and the J♦, then perhaps the A, 10, K, Q, 9, 8 and 7, determines the tops multiplier. For example, if a hand has the J♣ and the J♠, but not the third-top-ranking card, the J♥, then this hand, for a suit or grand game, has tops or matadors multiplier of 2. If a hand has the J♣ but not the second-highest-ranking J♠, then the hand has a tops multiplier of 1. If a hand has all four jack cards but no ace from the designated trump suit in a suit game, then the hand will have a multiplier of 4. A grand game can have up to four tops or matadors multipliers, since only the four jack cards are trump cards, and only the four jack cards count as part of a "ranked sequence" of top-ranked cards in a hand.

In addition, the number of cards that DO NOT exist in a 10-card hand, in an unbroken ranked sequence, starting with the J♣, and perhaps continuing with the J♠, the J♥, and the J♦, then perhaps the A, 10, K, Q, 9, 8 and 7, can also determine the tops multiplier. For example, if a hand lacks the two top-ranking black jacks, but has the third-top-ranking J♥, then the hand will have a tops multiplier of 2.

A declarer also gains a multiplier of 1 by playing a "hand" game. What is a hand game? A hand game is a game where a declarer does not make use of the Skat cards. The two cards in the Skat pile can, at the declarer's option, be exchanged with up to two of the 10 cards in the declarer's hand. For example, if a declarer declares a grand game, only the jack cards are trump cards. If the declarer decides to see the Skat cards, and one of the Skat cards is a jack card, the declarer will want to keep that jack card, and perhaps exchange that jack card with a low-ranking worthless card, like a 7 card. A declarer can improve the declarer's hand by seeing the Skat cards and exchanging the cards as needed. If the declarer decides that the declarer's hand is strong enough to win without the Skat cards, then the declarer may decided to not see the Skat cards or exchange cards with the Skat cards. By opting out of not seeing the Skat cards, the declarer will be at a slight disadvantage, but the declarer will be rewarded with an extra multiplier of 1 for taking the risk of not seeing or exchanging the skat cards. A declarer can do a Skat exchange with all three game types: grand, null and suit.

Here is another weird idea: The trick-taking points won in the 10-trick round of Skat, up to 120 points for either the declarer or the defender team, are themselves worthless and do not count. By winning the round of Skat, with at least 61 points, a declarer does not keep those trick-taking points. Instead, winning 61+ trick-taking points gives the declarer the right to declare being the winner of that round of Skat. How, then, does the declarer score points from that round of Skat? The declarer's points come from multiplying the base value of the declarer's game by the multiplier of the declarer's game. For example, if the declarer wins 88 points from the trick-taking, the declarer does not get any of those 88 points. However, if the declarer of that game previously declared a clubs suit game, with a base value of 12 points, and that game had 3 multipliers, then the declarer's final points tally for that round of Skat would be 12 x 3 = 36 points. That's how many points that declarer wins for that round of Skat. The 88 trick-taking points do not count and can be "thrown in the garbage," so to speak.

With null games, the points won from losing all tricks in the trick-taking phase of the game are of fixed values. A basic null game, where the null game declarer sees the Skat cards and plays the game with the declarer's cards closed and not shown to the opponents, can win a fixed game point value of 23 points. If the declarer plays a closed null game and does not see the Skat, and instead plays a "null hand" game, then the declarer can win 35 points. If the declarer sees the Skat cards, and plays the game with the declarer's cards open for all the defenders to see, then the declarer plays a "null open" game, with a fixed game points value of 46 points. If the declarer plays a "null open hand" game, with the highest risk, and "successfully" loses all of the tricks, then the declarer will win 59 game points.

After being dealt 10 cards, each player decides if their cards can win either a grand, null or suit game. If a player decides that their cards cannot win either game, then the player will pass on bidding on that hand. If a player decides that the player can win one of these games, the player determines the base value of the game that can be won (grand 24; null 23/35/46/59; suit clubs 12, spades 11, hearts 10 and diamonds 9) and determines the multiplier value for that hand. The minimum multiplier value for a hand will be 1 for winning the trick-taking phase of the game with that hand, plus a minimum tops multiplier of 1, for a minimum of 2 multipliers. Remember that multiplier values only apply to suit and grand games. Null games only have four fixed game point values of 23, 35, 46 or 59.

For example, if a player thinks that the player has enough high-ranking diamonds cards to win a diamonds game, and the player's hand has a projected multiplier of 3, then the player's hand could be worth 9 x 3 = 27 game points. The player can bid the hand up to 27 and be confident of both winning the game and winning enough game points to equal or exceed the 27 points auction bid contract. If the player has enough jack cards or ace cards to win a grand game (base value 24) and the player estimates that the multiplier value for that hand would be 2, then the player could bid the hand up to 24 x 2 = 48, and probably would win the grand game and win enough game points to equal or exceed the bid contract value.

The lowest-value game in Skat is a diamonds suit game with 2 multipliers, that will yield a total of 9 x 2 = 18 points. This is from adding up the game win multiplier of 1 with the lowest possible tops multiplier of 1, yielding a total multiplier of 2. Given that, the minimum auction bid that is possible in Skat is 18 points. The next-lowest bid value in Skat is 20 points, which would result from a hearts suit game (base value of 10) multiplied by a minimum multiplier of 2, yielding 20 points. Then 22 for the lowest-value spades suit game and 23 for the lowest-value null game, and 24 for the lowest-value clubs game. The next bid value would be 27, for a diamonds game with a multiplier of 3. The lowest-value grand game that is possible is 48 points, from a base value of 24 for the grand game, with the minimum multiplier possible of 2, yielding 24 x 2 = 48 points.

Therefore, the Skat auction starts with the value of 18, and proceeds in this sequence: 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 35, 36, etc. The entire table of bid values can be derived by multiplying the different base values by multipliers of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, etc., and also adding to this table the null game values of 23, 35, 46 and 59.

There is a certain order to determining which player starts the bidding, and which player plays the first card of the first trick of the game. The players are designated the forehand player, the middlehand player, and the rearhand player. The forehand player plays the first card of the first trick of the game. From there, the player who won the previous trick gains the right to start the first card of the next trick.

The player to the left of the dealer is the forehand player. The player to the forehand player’s left is the middlehand player, and the third player is the rearhand player. The middlehand player starts the bidding process, by declaring a pass on the bidding, or bidding the minimum bid of 18. The forehand player then responds to the middlehand player, either by making an initial bid if the middlehand player passed, or by saying “yes” to the middlehand player’s initial bid. The forehand player who agrees to the middlehand player’s initial bid then ups the bid to the next bid value, which would be 20. The middlehand and the forehand players go back and forth this way until one of them passes. The non-passing player (either the forehand player or the middlehand player) then bids with the rearhand player. The rearhand player and the non-passing player go back and forth until one of them passes. The bid winner then has the right to declare the type of game that will be played in that round of Skat (grand, null or suit) and has the right to declare which suit will be the trump suit if a suit game is declared, and has the right to see the Skat cards. The winning bidder does not necessarily have the right to play the first card of the first trick of the game. The forehand player has the right. The winning bidder will have that right if the winning bidder if the forehand player.

The Skat Exchange

The winning bidder has the right to see the two Skat cards and exchange one or two cards from the winning bidder's hand with the Skat cards. The purpose of this exchange would be to try to strengthen the winning bidder's hand. Suppose, for example, that the winning bidder has the following cards before seeing the Skat cards:

J	J	A	10	K	9	10	9	A	7
♥	♦	♣	♣	♣	♣	♠	♠	♥	♥

This hand might be strong enough to play a clubs game, with four clubs cards, including the three highest-ranking clubs cards, and two jack cards. The Skat reveals the J♣ and the J♠. The winning bidder keeps the two jack cards, and decides to put the 7♥ and the 10♠ in the Skat. This results in the following post-Skat hand of cards:

J	J	J	J	A	10	K	9	9	A
♣	♠	♥	♦	♣	♣	♣	♣	♠	♥

Any cards that are stored in the Skat are the property of the winning bidder, and the points values of the cards in the Skat will be added to the total value of trick-taking points when the winning bidder plays the trick-taking phase of the game. Therefore, the winning bidder will be able to add the 10 points value of the 10♠ card, that is stored in the Skat, to the total trick-taking points that the bidder wins in the trick-taking phase of the game. The 7♥ has no value and will not add to the winning bidder's trick-taking points.

Why did the winning bidder choose to put these cards in the Skat? Putting the 10♠ in the Skat will prevent the 10♠ from being captured by the defenders' A♠ card. Putting the 7♥ in the Skat will shorten the winning bidder's hearts suit to only one card, the A♥ card. The A♥ will probably win a trick if the wining bidder starts a trick with the A♥ card. Also, once the winning bidder used up the A♥ card, the winning bidder will no longer have any hearts cards. That is, the hearts suit will become a VOID SUIT for the winning bidder. Since the winning bidder will no longer have any hearts cards, if a defender starts a trick with a high-value hearts card like the 10♥, then the winning bidder will be able to play out of suit. The winning bidder could play a jack card in response to the defenders' 10♥, and win the 10 points from the defenders' 10♥ card, plus the 2 points from the jack card.

Notice that the winning bidder or declarer, who previously thought of playing a clubs card, is now able to play a grand game instead. This is because the declarer was lucky to be able to add 2 jack cards from the Skat. The declarer has four jack cards and a strong suit of clubs suit that contains the three top-ranking clubs cards, plus the essentially invincible A♥. The declarer should easily be able to win a grand game, since only jack cards are trump cards in the grand game, and the declarer owns all of the jack cards, plus several top-ranking cards in non-jack suits. Therefore, instead of declaring a clubs game, the declarer instead declares a grand game. This makes sense, since the hearts game, with a base value of 10, will yield far fewer game points compared to the grand game, with a base value of 24.

This illustrates a basic tactic of the Skat exchange. A winning bidder may benefit from using the Skat exchange to eliminate all cards from a suit, to convert that suit into a void suit. Or, a winning bidder may use the Skat exchange to eliminate all by the highest-ranking ace card from a suit. This will then allow the winning bidder to start a trick with that winning ace card, and both win that trick and also convert the suit of that ace card into a void suit upon playing that ace card. Having void suits can be a key to winning a game, since this will give a player numerous chances to play out of suit. The ability to play out of suit has various advantages, such as the ability to use a trump card out of suit, to capture a high-ranking card in a trick that was started with a card from a suit that is a void suit for a player. In a null game, playing out of suit can allow a player to dump a risky high-ranking card like an ace or a king card.

Skat Basic Tactics For Various Game Types

Grand Games

Ideally, to be usable in a grand game, a hand should have at least two jack cards, and preferably at least one black jack, and ideally should have an ace card or an ace-ten combo in every suit. The hand might also have a void suit, which would give the declarer the ability to play out of suit.

One of the key strategic elements to consider, if considering playing a grand game, is whether or not the declarer's 10 cards are strong enough to prevent the defenders from taking over the grand game, and then starting tricks in cards of suits of which the defenders are strong. Suppose, for example, that a declarer had this post-Skat hand:

J♥	J♦	A♣	10♣	K♣	9♣	10♠	9♠	A♥	7♥

This hand has very few diamonds, hearts or spades cards. If a grand game declarer started a trick with the J♥, any defender with a jack card would have to follow suit and play a jack card. If one defender had both jack cards, which would both be black jack cards, that defender would play one of those jack cards in the trick. The declarer would lose the trick to the defender's black jack card. The defenders could then start the next trick with a high-ranking diamonds or spades card, like the A♠ or the A♦, and then take control of the game in the spades or diamonds suits, of which the defenders have strong cards. The declarer might have to use up the declarer's last jack card to win one of those diamonds or spades tricks, to try to re-take control of the game. That would leave the defenders with the only jack card remaining in the game. The defenders could then use that jack card to take control of the game on the next trick, and start tricks with cards from suits of which the defenders are strong. The declarer could then lose the grand game.

If the declarer is lucky, the defenders' two jack cards would be distributed evenly among the defenders, with each defender having a jack card. The declarer could then start a trick with a red jack card, which (by the rules of grand games) would force the two defenders to each follow suit with a jack card. This would result in the declarer having the only jack card in the game. The declarer could later use that jack card to take control of the grand game, and start and win five tricks in the clubs suit, and win one trick in the hearts suit, by starting a trick with the A♥.

If the declarer was unlucky, the black jack cards would be unevenly distributed among the defenders, with one defender having both black jack cards. The declarer then would not eliminate both defender jack cards by starting a trick with a red jack card. If the declarer started a trick with a red jack card, the declarer would lose that trick, and the defenders would be able to win the next trick that was started with a jack card, since the defenders would play a black jack card against the declarer's red jack card. This would give the defenders the ability to take control of the grand game and start multiple tricks with cards from suits of which the defenders would be strong.

The strongest hands to use for grand games would have 3 or 4 jack cards in the hand. With 3 jack cards, the declarer could start a trick with a jack card, and force out the one defender jack card, and the declarer would still have two jack cards to use. The declarer could use the jack cards to take control of the game and then start tricks in suits of which the declarer is strong. The declarer could also use the jack card to win tricks in which the defenders put down high-value cards like aces or tens.

Having 4 jack cards could be a jackpot hand for the declarer, especially if the 10-card hand had a few aces and tens to give it power in addition to the 4 jack cards. If the declarer could win a 4-jack grand game, the declarer would win at least 120 game points, since the declarer would have 4 of the top-ranking cards in a ranked sequence in the hand, which would yield 4 multipliers, that would be added to the game win multiplier of 1, yielding at least 5 multipliers. Multiplying 5 by the grand game base value of 24 would yield 120 points. The declarer could win 144 points if the declarer won a schneider victory (90+ trick-taking points) using this strong hand, since the schneider victory would add another multiplier, yielding 6 multipliers (6 x 24 = 144). However, a 4-jack grand game is not a guarantee of victory. Suppose the declarer has this post-Skat hand:

J	J	J	J	9	8	8	7	Q	9
♣	♠	♥	♦	♣	♣	♠	♠	♥	♥

Should the player play this hand as a grand game? The hand has four jack cards. However, the hand does not have any high-ranking ace, ten or king cards, and only has one queen card. The defenders own these high-ranking cards. The grand game declarer would only be guaranteed to be able to win four tricks with this hand. The defenders, with some skill, would be able to win the other tricks with their ace, ten, king and queen cards. The defenders would then be able to self-capture their high-value ace, ten, king and queen cards, and the defenders would try to only play low-value cards when the declarer played a jack card. The declarer might not be able to win enough trick-taking points (61+ points) to win the game. The declarer would then lose -240 points, since the declarer would lose a grand game with a multiplier of 5 (four jack cards and the game win multiplier = 5, yielding 5 x 24 = 120 points) and the 120 points total, that the declarer would earn if the declarer won the game, would instead be multiplied by a game loss multiplier of -2, yielding a -240 points loss for the declarer!

It is also possible to play a grand game with a hand that did not have any jack cards! These kinds of grand games are risky, however, and should only be attempted by experienced players! Generally, if a hand of cards has at least 52 points worth of ace and ten cards, and has an ace card in all suits, the hand might be powerful enough to survive a grand game without the declarer having any jack cards. However, a declarer needs experience to be able to visualize a trick-taking sequence that would allow the declarer to win a grand game with a hand that did not have any jack cards. Such a hand, if won, would yield a jackpot points payout, since the hand would have at least 5 multipliers, due to lacking the 4 highest-ranking jack cards, in a sequence, which would yield a multiplier of 4, that would be added to the game win multiplier of 5. 5 x 24 = 120, where 24 would be the grand game base value.

Suit Games

In suit games, the jack cards and the cards from the declared trump suit are trump cards. A 10-card hand that might be used for a suit game should ideally have six trump cards in total, such as two jack cards and four cards from the trump suit. Ideally, the jack cards and the cards from the trump suit should be high-ranking, such as black jack cards, or trump suit cards containing the ace, ten or king. A hand with two red jack cards and four low-ranking trump suit cards might not be able to win. The defenders would win too many tricks with their high-ranking trump cards. Such a weak hand might be stronger, however, if the other suits had aces or ace-ten combos.

One of the key tactical considerations, when thinking of playing a hand as a suit game, is to determine how to neutralize the power of the defenders' jack cards, or high-ranking cards like the ace or ten cards, that the defenders might possess in the trump suit. If a declarer owns the highest-ranking jack cards, and the ace and ten cards, of the trump suit, then this is not much of a problem, since the declarer owns these strong cards anyway. If the declarer is missing some of the most powerful of the jack cards or trump suit cards, the declarer might be able to force out these defender cards, but only if the declarer has a majority of the trump cards. There are a total of 11 trump cards in a suit game (4 jack cards + 7 non-jack cards from the trump suit). If a declarer, for example, had 7 trump cards, the declarer could start a trick with a low-value trump card, like a 7 of the trump suit, and might force the defenders to follow suit with each defender playing a trump card. Since the defenders would probably have 11 – 4 = 4 total trump cards, the declarer might force the defenders to give up 2 of those 4 trump cards in that one trick that the declarer started with a low-ranking trump card. Of course, the declarer would lose that trick, and lose the advantage of being able to dictate the suit of the card that would start the next trick. The declarer might instead think that it would be best to win these tricks where the declarer is trying to force out the defender trump cards. In that case, the declarer might start a trick with a high-ranking trump card that would be guaranteed to win the trick, such as the J♣ uber-trump. That way, the defender would force out up to two defender trump cards, but would also win the trick, and maintain the right to dictate the suit and rank of the first card that would start the next trick.

Note how, if the suit game declarer had 7 trump cards, the defenders would have 4 trump cards, and the declarer could in theory force out all defender trump cards by starting two tricks with trump cards, assuming that the defenders’ trump cards were evenly distributed 2-2 among the defenders. In suit games, if a trick is started with a trump card, all players who had a trump card must follow suit by playing a trump card.

However, if the suit game declarer only had 6 trump cards, then the defenders would have 5 trump cards. The declarer would need to start at least three tricks with trump cards, and use up 3 trump cards, to (in theory) force out all of the defender trump cards, assuming that the defenders played 2 trump cards in each of the first two tricks that the declarer started with a trump card, and played their final trump card in the third trick. After the declarer forced out the defender trump cards, this would leave the defender would relatively few trump cards to use to try to dominate the game. It would be particularly risky to play a suit game with only 5 trump cards, since the defenders would own a majority of trump cards (6 trump cards). Such a game might be winnable, but a declarer would need careful, experienced know-how to know when such minority trump card games were winnable.

Null Games

It is somewhat unusual for a post-Skat hand to be usable for a null game. Generally, a post-Skat null set of cards should have either a 7 or an 8-9 combo or a solo 8 card in every suit. There should ideally be no more than one big jump from a low-ranking card like a 7 to a high-ranking card like a K. Ideally, a null card set would have at least one void suit (a suit with no cards in it). That way, if the defenders started a trick with a card from that suit, that was a void suit for the declarer, the declarer could play out of suit and dump the riskiest high-ranking card that the declarer had. For example, if the declarer had a suit with two cards, the 7 and the A, the declarer would hope to be able to dump the A card in a trick started by the defenders in a suit which was a void suit for the declarer. Generally, it can be difficult to find a chance to dump more than one risky high-ranking card, like an A or K, in a null game trick. So, it is best not to play a null game with a hand of 10 cards if that hand has more than one big jump. For example, if a post-Skat hand has a 7-K jump in hearts and a 7-A jump in the spades suit, it may be too risky to play.

The pre-Skat hand, that a player is considering playing as a null game, should ideally have no more than two big jumps from a low card like an 8 to a high card like a K. There would then be a good chance of being able to put one or more of the high-ranking cards in the Skat, to keep that card out of the hand, so that the post-Skat hand would have only one risky jump from a low-ranking card to a high-ranking card.

If the null game declarer starts a trick, the null game declarer may want to start a trick with a 7 card, to be guaranteed to lose the trick. Or, if a hand has an unbroken sequence of cards starting with the 7 card, such as a 7, 8, 9 of a suit, a declarer could start with the highest-ranking card of that unbroken sequence, the 9 card, and probably not win the trick. A null game declarer could probably start with an 8 card from a suit that only had an 8 card, and probably not win the trick.

Example Annotated Skat Games

Hearts Suit Game

Suppose that the forehand player was dealt the following hand:

J	J	10	9	8	A	7	K	7	A
♣	♥	♥	♥	♥	♠	♠	♦	♦	♣

The hand has two jack card, including the J♣. The J♥ may win a trick, but this is not guaranteed. There are three non-jack hearts cards, which gives some potential to play this hand as a hearts game. It might be risky to play this hand as a null game. Three of the suits have 7's or 8-9 combos, but there are several abrupt jumps from low-rank cards to high-rank cards, and the two skat cards might not be enough to improve the hand enough to safely play a null game. Bidding on a grand game would be risky, given that there are few ace and ten cards.

A hearts game has a better prospect than a grand game, given that the player only has one club card, which is a dominating A♣. By playing the A♣, the player will convert the clubs suit into a void suit, which would give the player opportunities to use low-value hearts trump cards to ruff high-value clubs cards. Also, since the A♣ is a trump card, the player would probably win the trick and thereby maintain control of the game, instead of ceding control to the defenders by playing a weak club card. Losing game control could be fatal, considering that this hand may be borderline winnable, due to a lack of ace-ten or ace-ten-king combos in the suits.

The clubs and diamond suits are short, with only two cards, so these suits could efficiently be converted to void suits. The clubs suit only contains the A♠, which can provide a double advantage, when played, of both converting the spades suit into a void suit, and also of maintaining control of the game. The short suits, that can become void suits, combined with the trumping ace cards of those suits, help make up for the somewhat weak strength of the hearts suit. Without those ruffing chances and aces, the hearts game might be a bit too weak to play, since it has only 3 non-jack hearts, which are not particularly strong as trumping cards.

The player would need to see the

skat, to try to strengthen a somewhat weak hand. The skat yields the Q♣ and the K♠. The player keeps both skat cards, and discards the two diamond cards, which saves 4 points in the skat. The post-skat hand becomes:

J	J	10	9	8	A	K	7	A	Q
♣	♥	♥	♥	♥	♠	♠	♠	♣	♣

The player declares a hearts game at a bid of 18. With the post-skat hand, the diamond suit becomes a void suit from the beginning of the trick-taking phase of the game.

The declarer's main strategy is to try to play such as to have dominating trumps power in all suits, but to have that power in the second half of the trick-taking phase of the game. The declarer would then be able to capture any high-value cards that the defenders kept towards the end of the game. By dominating in all suits in the second half of the game, the declarer can dictate the suit of the first cards of tricks, and also maintain control over the ability to start the next trick. To help achieve this strategy, the declarer would avoid playing high-ranking trump cards in the early stage of the trick-taking phase of the game. Instead of "leading from the high" in the initial stages of the trick-taking phase of the game, the declarer "leads from the low."

The declarer is also concerned about being trumped or ruffed by the defenders' jacks. The declarer ideally wants to play such that if the declarer plays a jack in that trick, the declarer will capture at least one defender jack in that trick.

In this game, the declarer is in the forehand position. The declarer also keeps in mind the tactic of letting the middlehand player win a trick, so that the middlehand player will initiate the next trick, and the declarer will then be able to see both the middlehand and the rearhand cards before the declarer must choose a card. This gives the declarer some ability to know about the players' cards, before playing a card.

Sometimes, it may be useful for the declarer to sacrifice a low-value card in order to allow the middlehand to win the trick, to increase the chance of being able to ruff a high-value card played by the middlehand and/or rearhand when it is the declarer's turn to put down a card. This tactic can also increase the declarer's chance of being able to capture one of the declarer's own high-value cards, after playing that card against weaker cards already played by the middlehand and the rearhand.

With 8 total cards in each suit, of which 7 are non-jack cards, the declarer keeps in mind potential card distributions among the players. The defenders have four non-jack spades cards, five non-jack diamonds cards, five non-jack clubs, and four non-jack hearts. The cards are probably distributed evenly in a 3-2 or 2-2 relationship. The declarer has a total of five trump cards: two jacks and three non-jack hearts. The defenders therefore have six trump cards: two jacks and four non-jack hearts. The declarer can in theory eliminate the six defender trumps by starting three tricks with trump cards, assuming that two defender trumps are used up in each trick. This would give the declarer two hearts or jacks trump cards to use towards the second half of the trick-taking phase of the game. The declarer wants to try to play such that each heart or jack card that the declarer plays in the early stages of the trick-taking phase of the game will consume two defender trump cards.

In the trick-taking phase of the game, the declarer might be able to gain clues about the defenders' cards distribution. This partly depends on what are the highest value or lowest value cards that the defenders play in response to the declarer's cards. The declarer must, of course, count cards to determine which trump cards are remaining and which defender probably has which card.

The declarer, as forehand, starts by leading from the low, playing the 8♥. The declarer needs to spend the early phase of the trick-taking game flushing out hearts and jacks, to prevent the player's high-value hearts cards from being trumped in the early stages of the game. In addition, the player's best chance of eliminating two heart/jack trump cards for each heart/jack trump card that the player plays is highest in the earliest stages of the trick-taking phase of the game. The middlehand responds by playing the A♥, followed by the rearhand playing the K♥. By playing low, the declarer allowed the defenders to capture their own high-value A♥ and K♥ cards. This is the price that the declarer plays to eliminate two jack/hearts trump cards for the one jack/hearts trump card that the declarer played. This loss also has the advantage of giving the declarer trump status in the non-jack portion of the hearts suit. When the defenders' jacks are all played, the declarer will completely dominate the jack/hearts trump suit. Another advantage of this play is that, since the middlehand won the trick, the middlehand will initiate the next trick, so that the forehand will see both the defenders' cards before deciding on which card to use.

In the second trick, the middlehand plays the K♣, and the rearhand plays the 7♣. Should the declarer, as forehand, capture these cards with the A♣? No. Since the defenders still have the 10♣, if the declarer plays the A♣, then the declarer will lose trump control over the clubs suit. This can result in the declarer losing control of the game and losing the ability to capture high-value cards towards the second half of the trick-taking phase of the game. The declarer's strategy focuses on being able to have dominating trumps control over all suits in the second half of the trick-taking phase of the game. In addition, if the declarer wins the trick, the declarer will initiate the next trick, so that the two defenders will both see the declarer's card and have two chances between them to capture the declarer's card. Also, if the declarer plays the A♣, the declarer will be able to capture the declarer's own A♣, but the declarer will only capture a low-value K♣ card from the defender. There is a chance that, by keeping the A♣ in reserve and not playing it now, the declarer will be able to later capture the defenders' 10♣ with A♣. Instead of playing the A♣, the defender decides to lose the trick by playing the Q♣. This once again establishes the middlehand as the initiator of the next trick, and will give the forehand declarer knowledge of two defenders' cards before playing the defenders' own card.

The middlehand opens the next trick with the 10♣! This may be because the middlehand assumed that, since the forehand played the losing Q♣ on the last trick, that the declarer did not have the A♣. The middlehand assumed that the declarer would not pass up a chance to capture a K♣ with and A♣, if the declarer had the A♣. The declarer made the middlehand form a misleading conclusion in this regard, by losing with the Q♣ in the previous trick. The information feint of the declarer made the middlehand assume (wrongly) that the rearhand partner had the A♣, and that the rearhand partner would capture both the A♣ and the 10♣ with the A♣. Instead, the rearhand responds with the 7♣, and the forehand gobbles both the 10♣ and the A♣ with the A♣! A big 21 point blow to the defenders!

The declarer now has trumps control in the non-jack hearts trump suit and the spades suit, and no longer has diamonds or clubs cards, so that the declarer can potentially play out of suit and ruff in those suits. What remains is that the declarer needs to establish trumps control in the jack trumps area, or at least to eliminate the defenders' remaining jacks. The declarer then leads by playing the J♥, to try to eliminate defender jacks. The middlehand responds with the J♠, and the rearhand responds with the Q♥. The middlehand wins the trick, which is an advantage to the forehand, since the middlehand once again will initiate the next trick, and the give declarer the ability to know which two cards were played by the defenders before deciding which card to play. After this trick, the defenders still have one jack remaining, plus one hearts trump card remaining. When the remaining jack defender card is played, the declarer will have total trumps control in all suits.

For the fifth trick, the middlehand leads low, with the 8♣. The rearhand responds with another throwaway card, the 9♦. The declarer then plays a low-value throwaway card, the 7♠, to allow the middlehand to win the trick, since the declarer always has an information advantage if the middlehand initiates the tricks.

The middlehand then initiates the next trick with a low-value hearts trump card, the 7♥. The rearhand then responds with the J♦. This a great benefit for the declarer. The declarer responds with the all-powerful J♣, and wins the trick.

More importantly, this trick eliminates the last of the defenders' jack/hearts trump cards, which allows the declarer to dominate the game from this point on with trump cards in all suits.

The declarer then initiates (and wins) the next four tricks with the declarer's two remaining trump hearts cards, and the A♣ and the 10♣. This enables the declarer to gobble the defenders' remaining high cards and win the game.

The declarer won partly by taking advantage of the information advantages of having the middlehand initiate tricks. The declarer also won by focusing, in the first half of the trick-taking phase of the game, not on gobbling points, but on trying to establish trump domination in all four suits, and to eliminate the defenders' jacks. This then laid the groundwork for the declarer to capture the remaining high-value cards in the second half of the trick-taking phase of the game, thereby securing victory.

Example Grand Game

Suppose that the middlehand player was dealt the following hand:

J ♣	10 ♣	Q ♣	9 ♣	A ♥	A ♠	10 ♠	K ♠	8 ♠	10 ♦

This hand has one black jack, the J♣. There are four spades cards and three non-jack clubs cards. The clubs and spades suits could both form the basis of a potential suit game, although there are only 4-5 potential trump cards in the pre-skat hand for a clubs or spades suit game. There are two ace cards, that include an ace-ten combination. There is only one heart card and only one diamond card, so that these suits could efficiently be converted into void suits. The opponents have up to three jacks, however, and this could reduce the ability to play a suit game. The player might be able to use these cards to play a grand game, since in the grand game the player could probably flush out two defender jacks by playing the J♣ early in the game. This would leave only one opponent jack that the opponents could use to ruff a high-value declarer card. The player conservatively bids this hand as an 18, but the hand is weak enough that the player will not bid much beyond 18.

However, both of the opponents pass. This increases the player's confidence, in that the player's hand might be a bit weak, but so might be the hands of the opponents. The player needs to see the skat, which turns up the A♦ and the 8♥. The player keeps both skat cards, and saves in the skat the A♠ and the 8♠. The post-skat hand becomes:

J	10	Q	9	A	8	10	K	A	10
♣	♣	♣	♣	♥	♥	♠	♠	♦	♦

Putting the worthless 8♥ next to the A♥ helps to protect the A♥ from being ruffed. If forced to play a heart against an opponent jack, the player could play the worthless 8♥ instead of the A♥. This demonstrates a simple tactic for increasing the value of the hand, by allying a valuable card with a worthless card to prevent a forced ruffing of the more valuable card.

By saving the A♠ in the skat, the player guarantees 11 points. However, the 10♠ and the K♠ are both trump cards in the spades suit. The K♠ might win a trick, but also serves as a relatively low-valued card that is paired with the to 10♠. This pairing prevents the player from being forced to play the 10♠ against a ruffing opponent jack card. The player could play the lower value K♠ instead of the higher value 10♠ card.

With the post-skat hand, the player has trump card control in the jacks and in all of the suits except for the clubs suit, since the opponents have the A♣.

The player declares an 18 point grand game contract. If the declarer captures the player's own non-club aces and tens, that will yield 52 points. One problem, however, is that even if the declarer flushes out two defender jacks with the J♣, the defenders will still have one jack remaining, that they could use to ruff one of the declarer's high-value aces or tens. The declarer may only be guaranteed to be able to capture 42 points worth of the declarer's own aces and tens.

The declarer might also capture another 6 points with the J♣, if the defenders are forced to play two jack cards in response to the declarer starting a trick with the J♣, for a total of 38 points guaranteed, plus the 11 points in the skat, yielding a minimum of about 47 points. Somehow, the declarer needs to get another 14 points, which might be achievable if the declarer can capture the declarer's own high-value 10♣ in a ruffing play, along with a few other queens and kings captured along the way.

Somehow, the declarer needs to prevent the defenders from using their A♣ to capture the declarer's own 10♣. This might be possible if a trick occurs where the rearhand defender starts the trick with a clubs card, and the middlehand declarer plays the final clubs card of the trick after seeing the two defenders' clubs cards.

This hand is marginally winnable, but the declarer might be able to play it to victory. The declarer will focus on using the first five tricks to cash in on high-value trumps cards, and to play the J♣, early in the game, to quickly flush out two defender jacks. This may increase the probability of the defenders playing the fourth jack relatively early in the trick-taking phase of the game, to eliminate that fourth jack as a trumping vulnerability for the declarer. However, the declarer will probably not be able to avoid losing at least one high-value card to a defender jack.

The declarer might also lose the game if all three jacks are owned by one defender. This would give the defenders two ruffing tricks using jacks, since the declarer would only be able to flush out one defender jack by playing the J♣ if there is such a 3-0 split of jacks among the defenders. It is unlikely, however, that such a 3-0 split exists. This is because, typically, a defender with three jacks would have a strong hand, and would tend to bid on that hand. The fact that both defenders passed the initial bidding suggests that no defender has all three jacks, but that the jacks are split 2-1.

The forehand defender starts the first trick by playing low with the worthless 8♥. The middlehand declarer uses this opportunity to cash in the A♥, and the rearhand defender, as luck would have it, is forced to play the K♥. The king gives the declarer four much-needed points to help win a marginal hand.

The middlehand declarer starts the second trick with a jack-flushing play, playing the J♣. Fortunately for the declarer, both defenders are forced to dump jacks. The middlehand defender drops the J♦, and the forehand defender plays the J♠. There is now only one ruffing jack that the declarer must worry about.

The middland declarer starts the third trick with another attempt to cash in a high-value trump card, by playing the A♦. The middlehand defender plays the worthless 7♦, and the forehand defender plays the worthless 8♦.

The middlehand declarer starts the fourth trick with another points-grabbing play, by playing the 10♠. The rearhand defender dumps the worthless 9♠, but the forehand defender plays the Q♠, which yields a welcome extra 3-point bonus for the point-starved declarer.

The middlehand declarer starts the fifth trick by playing the 10♦. The declarer knows that, most likely, this meaty card will be ruffed with a defender jack. However, it is part of the declarer's calculations that the 10♦ will have to be a sacrificial lamb, that must be played to flush out the last defender jack. The rearhand defender plays the J♥, and the forehand defender plays the K♦.

The rearhand defender now will initiate the sixth trick. This may help the declarer, if the rearhand defender leads with a club, and gives the declarer a chance to capture the declarer's own 10♣. However, the rearhand defender plays a points-grabbing play, by playing the 10♥. The forehand defender plays the 9♥, and the declarer dumps the worthless 8♥.

The rearhand defender also initiates the seventh trick, and decides to start with a low-value club, the 8♣. The forehand defender helps the declarer by dumping the worthless 7♣. The declarer can now self-capture the declarer's own 10♣, which results in the declarer having a total point value of 66 points, counting what is in the skat.

The middlehand declarer starts the eight trick with the K♠, which is also a trump card. The rearhand defender dumps the 7♠, and the forehand defender dumps the 9♦. The declarer now had 70 points.

There will be no more points for the declarer. The declarer starts the ninth trick with the 9♣, which the rearhand defender answers with the A♣, and the forehand defender answers with the Q♦.

The rearhand defender starts the next trick with the K♣, which the forehand defender answers with the Q♥, and the declarer answers with the Q♣.

In hindsight, the declarer's win of the K♠ at the eighth trick was not significant to winning the game. The declarer was only able to win after capturing the declarer's own 10♣. The declarer was able to make this capture by benefitting from the information advantage of being the last card-player of the seventh trick. Since the declarer could have predicted that one of the declarer's trump cards would be gobbled by an outstanding defender jack, the declarer could have predicted that the capture of the 10♣, in a trick that did not involve the defenders' A♣, was critical to the declarer's victory.

The declarer's basic strategic approach to the trick-taking phase of the game, by the early cashing in of high-value non-jack trump cards, and the early flushing out of two of the defenders' jacks, led to victory since the declarer's post-skat card distribution made such a strategic approach feasible. The declarer had to factor in that the loss of a high-value trump card from an outstanding defender jack, had to be balanced by the declarer being able to capture the declarer's own 10♣, even though the defenders possessed the A♣, and potentially could have used that card to ruff the 10♣.

Null Game Versus Clubs Game

Suppose a player is dealt:

J ♣	A ♣	K ♣	9 ♣	8 ♣	7 ♣	A ♥	10 ♠	9 ♠	7 ♠

Should the player bid? The hand has one dominating jack, the J♣. The player's game could potentially be hijacked by the defenders' three other jacks. However, the hand has a long clubs suit of five non-jack clubs cards. The player declaring clubs may be able to dominate the clubs suit after starting three tricks with clubs cards to force out the defenders' clubs cards. In addition, the player would most likely be able to capture the player's own A♥. Since the hand does not have diamonds, the diamonds suit is a void suit. The hand has only one heart, so the hearts suit could easily be converted to a void suit., After these suits became void suits, the player could potentially ruff high-value heart and diamond cards from the defenders with club trump cards.

This hand also has low-value 7, 8 and 9 cards, which gives the hand some potential for playing a null game. However, to play a null game, the player will have to see the skat, since the player would have to eliminate the solo hearts card A♥, which would likely lead to an automatic loss if the defenders started a null game trick with a heart card.

The player bids 18 points on this hand, and wins the bid, and then decides to see the skat. The player would be looking for another jack from the skat, to help strengthen the hand. The skat does not reveal any jacks, but instead turns up the Q♣ and the 8♠.

With these skat cards, the player has the choice of using the Q♣ to strengthen the clubs suit to bid clubs, or using the 8♠ to add another low-value card to the set to help ensure a win in by bidding null. The player would likely win either bid, whether clubs or null. Which one should the player choose?

With a clubs bid, there would be 12 basis points. The J♣ would provide one multiplier, and winning the game would provide a second multiplier, yielding 24 points total. The aces and jacks held by the defenders would likely prevent the spades suit game declarer from scoring either a schneider or a schwartz victory.

If the player played a null game, the basis points for that would be 23, which would apparently be one less point than playing a clubs suit game. If the player intended to play a null game, then the player would keep both the Q♣ and the 8♠ from the skat, and would discard the A♣ and, of course, the deadly A♥. This would result in the following hand after the skat exchange:

J	K	Q	9	8	7	10	9	8	7
♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♠	♠	♠	♠

This is an unbeatable null hand. The cards are in a perfect “reverse trump” arrangement. With no hearts or diamonds cards, the player can easily discard high cards when the defenders played diamonds or hearts, and the player can lead spades or clubs from the lowest cards. Also, the defenders would quickly run out of clubs and spades cards, and would be forced to start tricks with hearts and diamonds cards. Since the hearts and diamonds suits are void suits for the declarer, the declarer could simply play high-ranking clubs and spades cards in response to tricks started by the defenders with hearts or diamonds cards.

The player can therefore play this null game as a null open or null ouvert game, which would gain another multiplier, and ensure that the player could score 46 points from winning this null game.

The player’s best choice would be to declare a null game and announce an open null game to win 46 points, instead of bidding a clubs trump game and only scoring 24 points. If there is a choice between game types, the player should carefully consider the basis points for each game type, and potential multipliers for different game types, to determine which game type choice will yield the maximum number of points.

The player should not play this hand as a grand game. The defenders could easily hijack the game with jacks and aces to force the declarer to react to multiple tricks with heart and diamond lead cards. The grand declarer would not be able to re-gain control once the defenders moved the game into hearts and diamonds territory. With 24 basis points in grand and a guaranteed loss, the negative points loss would be horrendous. The grand declarer might even lose a schneider defeat, yielding a 144 point loss, assuming three multipliers.

Sources for Further Reading

Books (Most written in German, some in English)

Browy, Calmer (1944). Skat for Beginners. College Typing Company. Madison, Wis.

Gößl, Rainer (2017). Der Skatfuchs: Gewinnen im Skatspiel mit Mathematischen Methoden. [The Skatfox: Winning in Skat with Mathematical Methods]. ebook. GD Publishing Ltd & Co KG.

Gutjar, Axel (2017). Reizvoller Skat: Tricks und Taktiken fur Fortgeschrittene [Delightful Skat: Advanced Tricks and Tactics]. Verlag Die Wekstatt GmbH. Gottingen, Germany.

Hertefeld, A. (1893). The Game of Skat in Theory and Practice. Translated by Professor Hoffmann. London, England. George Routledge and Sons, Limited.

Kinback, T. (2007). Skat-Ratsel – 50 lehrreiche Skataufgaben mit Losungen und Analysen. [Skat puzzles – 50 Instructive Skat Problems with Solutions and Analyzes, Volume 1]. Books on Demand, Norderstedt.

Link, Ron (2016). Skat: The Book: The Ultimate Card Game. Published by Skatlink.

Mamoun, John (2022). The Skat German Card Game Strategy Book.

Rui, Wolfgang (2011). Besser Skat spielen: Skat-Theorie für die Praxis. [Play Better Skat. Skat: Theory for the Practice]. E-book.

Wergin, J. P. (1975). Wergin on Skat and Sheepshead. Wergin Distributing, McFarland, Wisconsin.

Zinkstein, Berthold (2019). Moderner Skat: Vom Skatspieler zum Skatkönner. Independently Published.

Articles

Buro, M.; Long, J. R.; Furtak, T.; and Sturtevant, N. R. Improving state evaluation, inference, and search in trick-based card games. In IJCAI, 1407–1413, 2009.

S. Edelkamp, “Challenging human supremacy in Skat,” in Proceedings of the Twelfth International Symposium on Combinatorial Search, SOCS 2019, Napa, California, 16-17 July 2019, 2019, pp. 52–60. [Online]: https://aaai.org/ocs/index.php/SOCS/SOCS19/paper/view/18328

Kupferschmid, WS. And Helmertm M. A Skat player based on Monte-Carlo simulation. In Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Computers and Games, pages 135–147. Springer-Verlag, 2007.

Long, J. R. 2011. Search, Inference and Opponent Modelling in an Expert-Caliber Skat Player. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Alberta.

Internet

32 Karten [32 Cards]. Online internet discussion forum on Skat theories and information. https://32karten.de/forum/index.php.

Skat. By John MacLeod. https://www.pagat.com/schafkopf/skat.html

Skatfuchs [The Skatfox website].
https://www.Skatfuchs.eu/Literatur.htm

Skatgame.net. https://Skatgame.net/app/. Homepage of neural net Skat player Kermit.

The Skatordnung (International Rules of Skat).
www.weddslist.com/skat/ordnung/skatordnung1.html